



**Testimony
Bart Russell, Executive Director
Connecticut Council of Small Towns
Before the Public Health Committee
March 12, 2010**

Re: HB-5477, An Act Concerning Clean Water and Stream Flow Regulations

The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) urges support for HB-5477 which addresses fundamental concerns regarding the potential impact of proposed stream flow regulations on many of Connecticut's smaller towns and cities.

Although COST supports efforts to protect our rivers and streams, we are concerned that the regulations, as currently drafted, do not provide the appropriate balance needed to ensure sufficient water supplies to meet the needs of Connecticut's citizens. HB-5477 will help restore this balance by ensuring that the public water supply needs of our communities are protected.

In fact, many communities throughout Connecticut will simply not have the water to meet the existing needs of their residents and businesses under the proposed regulations. In addition, some communities will face potential moratoriums on new water service connections which will bring economic development to a standstill.

COST is also concerned that compliance with the draft regulations will impose significant costs on our towns and cities. Rates increases, which would be inevitable under the proposed regulations, will have severe financial implications for municipalities across the board. But even more troubling, local economies and revenue bases in communities faced with moratoriums on new service connections will stagnate, leading to further economic decline and job loss.

In addition, town and cities served by municipal water departments will be required to shoulder the cost – in many cases millions of dollars – for upgrades to their dams and other infrastructure in order to make the releases required under the proposed regulations. Other towns may have no choice but to look at developing new wells or reservoirs which will cost millions of dollars. Although the brunt of these costs will be reflected in water rates, some costs will be passed on to towns and cities and their taxpayers. These costs must be carefully examined and weighed, as called for in Section 2(c) of the bill, to ensure that we are not imposing yet another unfunded mandate on towns and cities.

Coming at a time when most towns and cities don't have sufficient revenues and/or state aid to fill the potholes in their roads, the proposed stream flow regulations make little sense. Unfunded mandates like this are breaking the "financial backs" of Connecticut's municipalities. **We therefore urge adoption of HB-5477, which will help address these concerns.**